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(Grace Chapel)

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FIRST OF TWO ARTICLES

Chapel Faces Uncertain Future

Editor's Note: This is the first of a two-part series on the restoration of Ewell's Grace Chapel, near Haymarket.

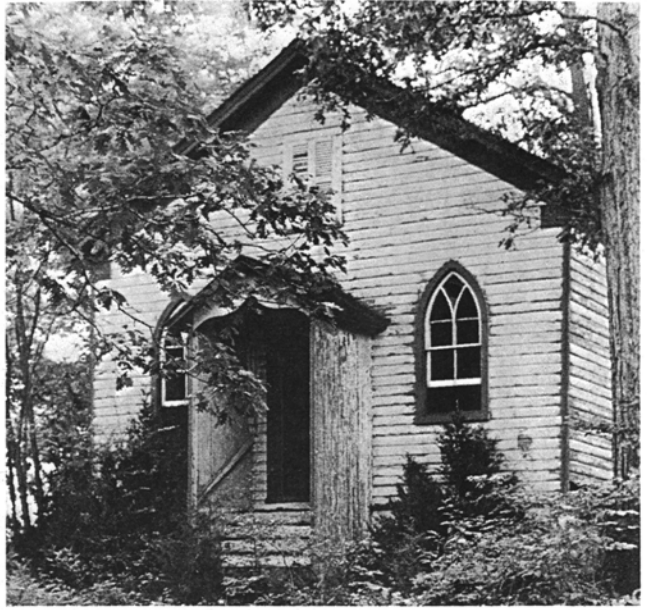
By TOMMYE S. BURTON
A historic, deteriorating chapel, over 120 years old, faces demolition if some means of preserving it does not appear soon.
If Ewell's Grace Chapel, just off of Route 15 near Haymarket, goes to the highest bidder, another chapter of Prince William County's vanishing history goes with it, into oblivion. But an attempt is underway to

raise \$10,000 to restore the chapel.
The pre-civil War structure belongs to St. Paul's Episcopal Church in Haymarket. The congregation was faced with the dilemma of choosing between restoring the chapel, for which no funds are available, or being liable for the present hazardous condition of the building, or having the building dismantled and the pieces sold.
At a congregational meeting in September, it was decided that the Vestry investigate with the Prince William County Historical Commission whether they would make a recommendation that the chapel had historical value. If not, the Vestry would have it dismantled. The timber sold and the land held for future use of the Episcopal Church.

The Vestry met Oct. 11, when Gainesville District Representative, Mrs. Sue Coe, presented the resolution of the Prince William County Historical Commission as follows:
"The commission does hereby advise the members of the congregation that there is historical evidence that Grace Chapel is an historically important structure. If structurally possible, this building should be preserved for future generations as an important part of their Virginia heritage."
"This Commission stands ready to offer any technical help it can in this project. However, as the property must remain in the ownership of the church, there is no way in which Prince William County could fund this project. We will, however, endeavor to mark the chapel with an historical marker."
The Vestry passed a motion to establish a Grace Chapel Restoration Fund and to request support from the community at large. A permanent committee was appointed including at least

one member of the Vestry and other interested persons, church members and non-church members.
The earliest deed for the chapel property known to exist is recorded in Prince William County Courthouse, dated August 10, 1847, and signed by Jesse Ewell and his wife, Ellen M.
There were at least five Jesse Ewells of direct descent, creating some confusion in past accounts of the founding of the chapel.
Alice Maude Ewell, author of "Virginia Scene", wrote that her great-grandfather, Squire Jesse Ewell, was the founder.
Squire Jesse Ewell was the son of Col. Jesse Ewell of Belaire, and father of Dr. Jesse Ewell, who was married to Ellen McGregor, and apparently the Jesse in the deed.
Since Dr. Jesse was Alice Maude's grandfather and not great-grandfather, who died in 1847 the year the chapel parcel was deeded, it seems to indicate that the great-grandfather had expressed his wishes verbally to have the chapel built and upon his death his wishes were carried out by

his son, Dr. Jesse.
The property was deeded to five trustees to build a chapel to be named "Rescol" for the use of the Methodist Episcopal Church South, "and when not in use by the ministers of said church, shall be free for the use of any other Christian sect or church."
The deed provided a method for the perpetuation of the five trustees.
The chapel was acquired in 1884 by the Episcopal denomination from Sudley Methodist Church. It then became known as Grace Chapel.
The vestry of St. Paul's interprets their deed that the property reverts back to the original heirs if not used for religious purposes.
Consequently, the chapel must remain the property of St. Paul's eliminating possibility of it being turned over to any historical group.
The board of trustees indicated in the deed will be reestablished to include the treasurer of St. Paul's, Mrs. John Marsh; chairman of the Grace Chapel Committee, Mrs. Janet Newcomb; and three other members of the congregation, including at



EWELL'S GRACE CHAPEL TODAY

least one vestryman.
A contractor, who has restored a number of old buildings gave an estimate of \$10,000 to fully restore the chapel, whose foundation of the north wall is crumbling.
The paneling of the interior

walls and ceiling are hand-planed boards. Some of the floor has collapsed. A search for the original furnishings has begun.
The structure is the original but, it was re-weatherboarded in the early 1900's.
The committee met Nov. 14, at the home of Mrs. Turner T. Smith, to initiate plans for steps toward the restoration and preservation of the chapel.
The windows, which have no panes, will be boarded and the walls shored to prevent further deterioration while an effort is made to raise the necessary \$10,000.
The committee will have various fund-raising activities while simultaneously seeking donations. Donations should be made to: Grace Chapel Restoration Fund, Mrs. John Marsh, Treasurer, 6305 Catharpin Rd., Gainesville, Va. 22065. Donations are tax deductible.
A work day has been scheduled Saturday, Dec. 1, when clean-up will be done on the chapel grounds.
The committee has already received some offers of assistance. A letter was

Mountain. This den for the last few years has visited nearby historical locations, including the chapel, with their Den Mother, Mrs. Sharon De Metz.

To be Continued



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